MARTIAN MANHUNTER and
SUPERMAN IN ACTION COMICS
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SCORCH RETURNS!

SMALLVILLE, KANSAS, NOVEMBER 7.
EXIT POLLS SHOWING LUTHOR A BIG LOSER IN VIRGINIA WITH ONLY A SLIGHT EDGE IN RHODE ISLAND --
HOWEVER, THE AIR OF CONFIDENCE IN THE LUTHOR-ROSS CAMP CONTINUES TO RISE --
THOR
TEN DOWN, FORTY TO GO. SO FAR, SO GOOD.
DOESN'T FEEL RIGHT, DOES IT, CLARK? EATING PETE'S FOOD, SMILING LIKE A FRIEND --
-- INSIDE HOPIN' HE'LL LOSE?
NO. I HATE IT, BUT IT'S THIS OR MISS OUT ON THE BIGGEST DAY IN PETE'S LIFE. I WON'T LET LUTHOR RUIN IT FOR EITHER OF US.
BESIDES, I'M SURE HE'LL APPRECIATE HAVING FRIENDS AROUND WHEN IT'S ALL OVER.
DOESN'T SOUND LIKE YOU'RE EVEN CONSIDERING THE POSSIBILITY THAT LUTHOR MIGHT WIN.
THAT'S BECAUSE I'M NOT. ARE YOU?
STRANGER THINGS, BOY...
NOT THAT STRANGE LUTHOR IN THE WHITE HOUSE... RIGHT.
...AND IF FROGS HAD WINGS, THEIR BUTTS WOULDN'T GET WET.

DECEMBER 31
WASHINGTON, D.C.
FIRESIDE CHAT
JOE KELLY Writes
ERIC CANETE Guest Pencils
JUAN VLASCO Guest Inks

"The Primary forces that drive the Machine of History are the critical lapses in Human judgment we continually foist upon one another. In unrelated news, Lex Luthor has won his bid for the Presidency..."
-- Clark Kent, Daily Planet. Dec. 2000
ROB SCHWAGER Colors
RICHARD STARKINGS Letters
TOM PALMER, JR Ass't Editor
EDDIE BERGANZA Editor
Superman created by JERRY SIEGEL and JOE SHUSTER

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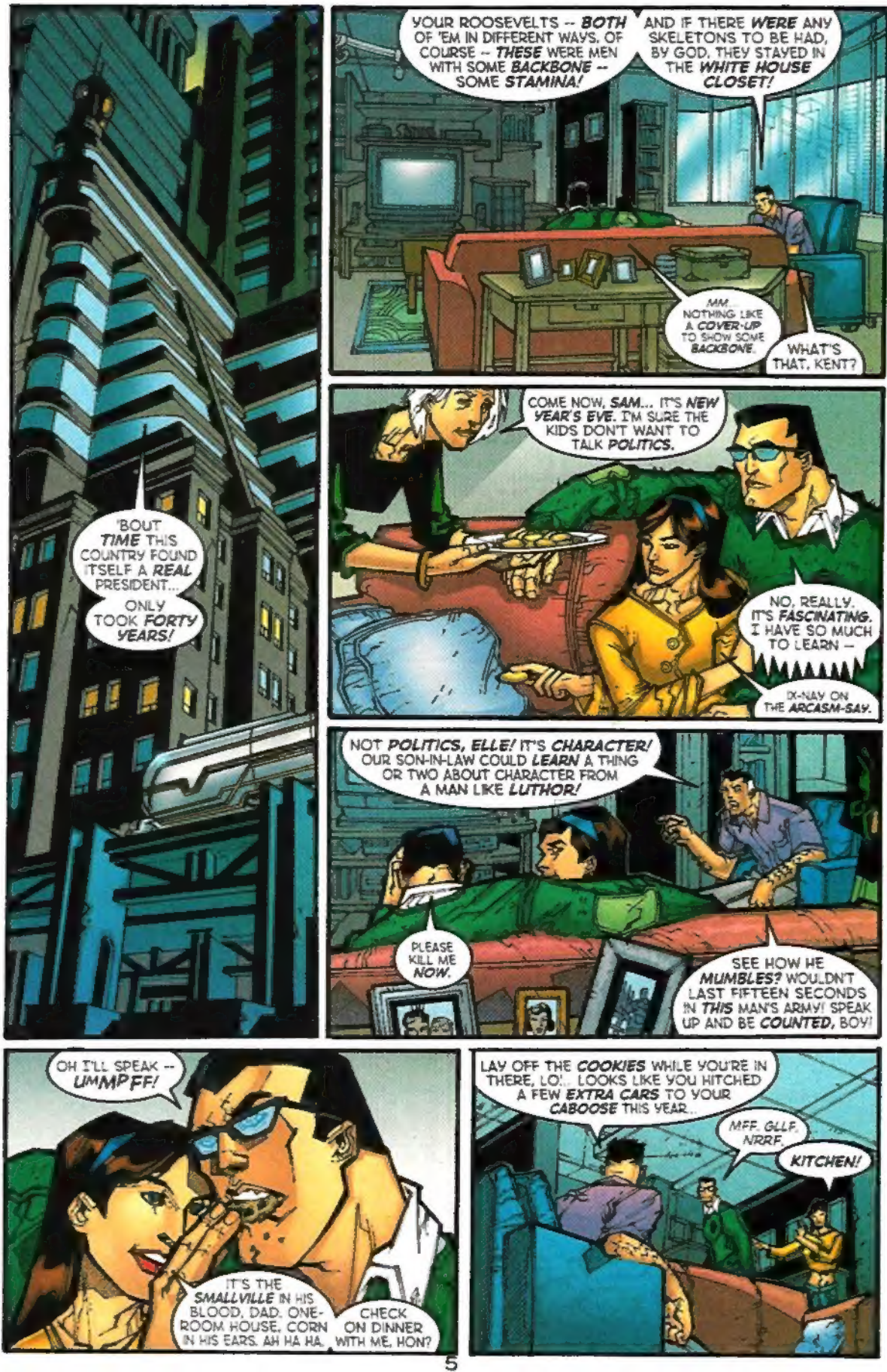
I WOULD LIKE TO SAVE US BOTH THE EMBARRASSMENT OF AN *UNCOMFORTABLE* MOMENT. *NEXT* TIME YOU VISIT MY HOME.
SAY IT *WITH* ME... "READY FOR DUTY..."
"MISTER."
"PRESIDENT."
"SIR."
GOD BLESS AMERICA.


'BOUT TIME THIS COUNTRY FOUND ITSELF A REAL PRESIDENT...
ONLY TOOK FORTY YEARS!
YOUR ROOSEVELTS -- BOTH OF 'EM IN DIFFERENT WAYS. OF COURSE -- THESE WERE MEN WITH SOME BACKBONE -- SOME STAMINA!
AND IF THERE WERE ANY SKELETONS TO BE HAD, BY GOD, THEY STAYED IN THE WHITE HOUSE CLOSET!
MM... NOTHING LIKE A COVER-UP TO SHOW SOME BACKBONE.
WHAT'S THAT, KENT?
COME NOW, SAM... IT'S NEW YEAR'S EVE. I'M SURE THE KIDS DON'T WANT TO TALK POLITICS.
NO, REALLY, IT'S FASCINATING. I HAVE SO MUCH TO LEARN --
IX-NAY ON THE ARCASM-SAY.
NOT POLITICS, ELLE! IT'S CHARACTER! OUR SON-IN-LAW COULD LEARN A THING OR TWO ABOUT CHARACTER FROM A MAN LIKE LUTHOR!
PLEASE KILL ME NOW.
SEE HOW HE MUMBLES? WOULDN'T LAST FIFTEEN SECONDS IN THIS MAN'S ARMY! SPEAK UP AND BE COUNTED, BOY!
OH I'LL SPEAK -- UMMPFF!
IT'S THE SMALLVILLE IN HIS BLOOD, DAD. ONE-ROOM HOUSE, CORN IN HIS EARS. AH HA HA.
CHECK ON DINNER WITH ME, HON?
LAY OFF THE COOKIES WHILE YOU'RE IN THERE, LO!... LOOKS LIKE YOU HITCHED A FEW EXTRA CARS TO YOUR CABOOSE THIS YEAR.
MFF. GLLF. NRRF.
KITCHEN!

BRAINIAC 13, YOUR FATHER. BI3. YOUR FATHER.
I DON'T KNOW WHICH MAKES FOR A WORSE NEW YEAR'S.
TELL ME ABOUT IT. YOU REMEMBERED TO WATER DOWN THE LIQUOR?
OF COURSE. YOU THINK I'M AS STUPID AS HE DOES?
HE DOESN'T THINK YOU'RE STUPID, CLARK...
...JUST INBRED.
FANTASTIC.
JUST JOKES, CLARK. COME ON, WE'VE GOT TO STICK TOGETHER IF WE'RE GOING TO MAKE IT TO 2001.
I KNOW... IT'S JUST -- I SPENT ALL DAY WATCHING LUTHOR DEFILE THE WHITE HOUSE. I SHOULDN'T HAVE TO HEAR HOW MUCH MORE OF A MAN HE IS THAN ME AT HOME.
FAMILY, HUH? GOTTA LOVE 'EM --
YOU KNOW WHAT I JUST REALIZED, LO'?
IF YOU'D TAKEN LUTHOR UP ON ONE OF HIS PROPOSITIONS -- YOU'D BE FIRST LADY INSTEAD OF A PAPER GIRL.
"REPORTER," DAD! NOT "PAPER GIRL."
MORE EXCITING LIFE THAN WITH MISTER WEAK HANDSHAKE "I DON'T DO SPORTS -- PLEASE PASS MY TEABAGS --"
OKAY! HEY! STILL HERE, DAD, THANKS!
WAIT JUST A SECOND AND YOU CAN INSULT ME IN PEACE WHILE I'M AT THE STORE. PEACHY.
YOU ARE NOT LEAVING ME. JIMMY WON'T BE HERE FOR TWO HOURS, AND HE'S BRINGING A DATE --
WE'RE OUT OF ICE.
I'LL PUT IN "GUNS OF NAVARONE." THAT'LL CALM HIM --
WE NEED DESSERT.
I'LL TELL HIM YOU TOOK NEEDLEPOINT IN GYM CLASS.
LOVE YOU.
WHOOSH
BEAT SOMETHING SENSELESS AND GET IT OUT OF YOUR SYSTEM BY THE TIME DINNER STARTS --
-- OR IT'S "WRATH OF LOIS" TIME.

SHE'LL GET ME FOR THAT. I JUST KNOW IT. SHE'LL WAIT TOO. UNTIL IT HURTS.
BUT I DON'T CARE RIGHT NOW. I CAN'T DEAL WITH SAM "SPIT AND VINEGAR" LANE TONIGHT --
-- NOT WHILE LUTHOR IS SPENDING NEW YEAR'S PREPARING TO GUT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.
AND SPEAKING OF... WHAT'S HE UP TO --
-- NOW?
LEAD. PAINT.
LEAD PAINT IN THE WHITE HOUSE... THAT NO-GOOD--
FIRE!
MY HEAT VISION! DID I --?

SKREARGGGH
NO. NOT ME...
THOUGHT I'D LOST CONTROL FOR A SECOND.
PERHAPS HE DOESN'T LIKE THE COLOR.
MUST HAVE JUST STARTED. THE INTEGRITY OF THE MONUMENT HASN'T BEEN COMPROMISED YET, BUT --
HEY... I CAN FEEL THAT. WEIRD. INCREDIBLE HEAT, BUT TIGHTLY CONTAINED --

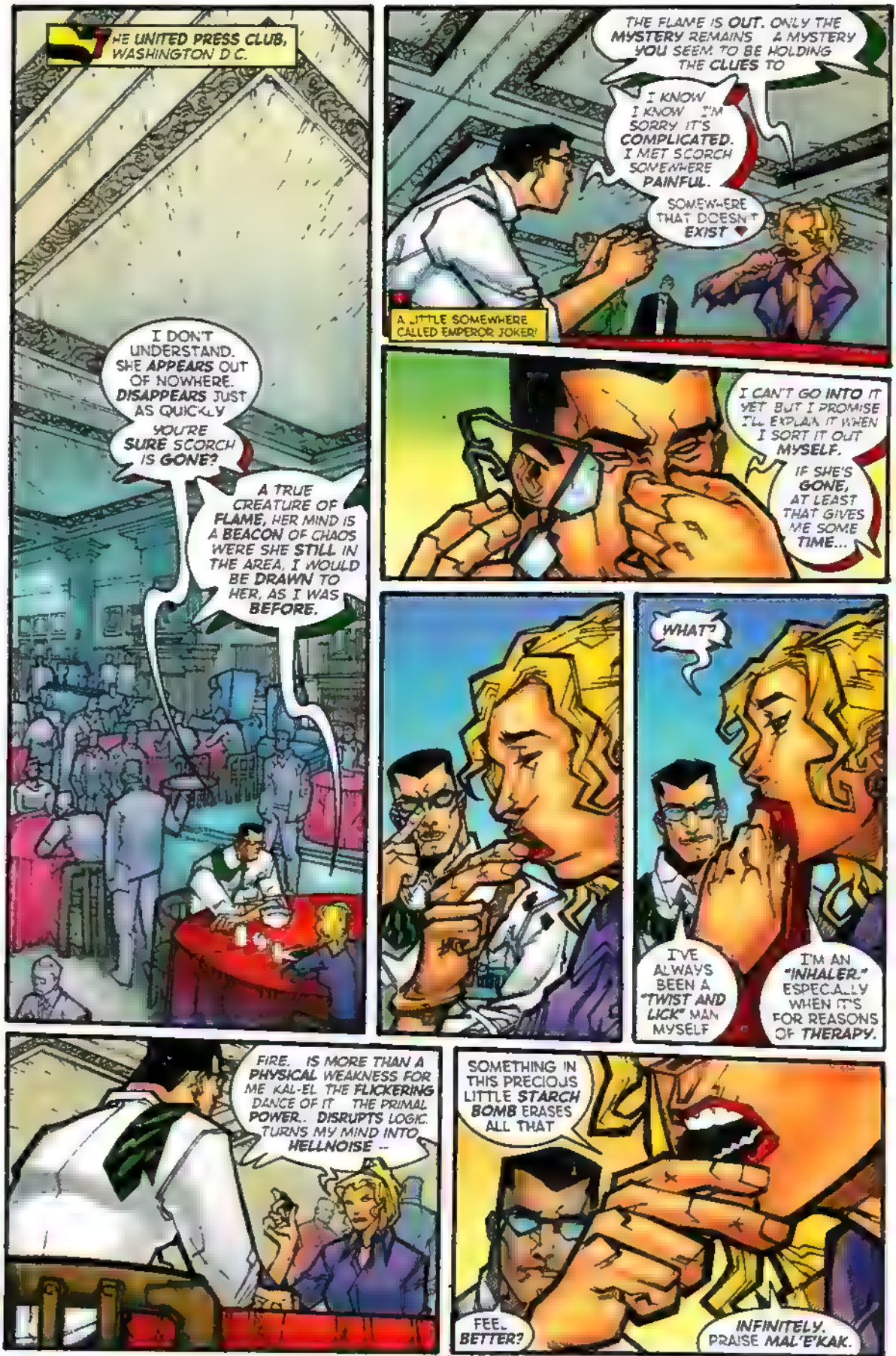
WHATEVER THIS THING IS, IT --
K-KAL-EL?
TELEPATHY. THAT CREATURE -- MARTIAN MANHUNTER?
C-CAN'T MAINTAIN FORM -- THE FLAMES... NOT NATURAL --
DON'T WORRY, J'ONN. I'LL --
NOT RIGHT. IT'S JUST NOT RIGHT.
WASN'T SUPPOSED TO PLAY LIKE THIS... PROMISES AND LIES FOR THE REST, BUT FOR ME...
...I WANT TO GO HOME.
SCORCH? HERE? THAT'S NOT POSSIBLE --
S-SUPERMAN... YOU MUST... THE FLAMES...
SHE SHOULDN'T EVEN EXIST -- MAN, IT'S HOT...
N-NOT NATURAL...
REALLY... HOT...
SUPERMAN. WOW.
HOW DID YOU FIND ME?

OH OOPS.
WOULD IT MAKE A DIFFERENCE IF I TOLD YOU I WAS JUST TRYING TO CLEAR MY HEAD AND I FORGOT NOT TO SET STUFF ON FIRE?
PROBABLY NOT. BETTER MAKE LEMONADE OUT OF HELL, THEN.
IF I DON'T GET WHAT I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS, NO ONE DOES.
BURN, BEAUTIFUL. YOU AND YOUR LITTLE DOG TOO.
YEARRGH!
MANHUNTER! SHE'S NEVER BEEN THIS POWERFUL BEFORE I COULD -- MANHUNTER!
D-DON'T UNDERSTAND J-JUST FIRE JUST
JONN HELP. BREATHE.
NGNHHHAAH!
COLD SO COLD -- SUPERMAN!
DOWN, JONN GET US DOWN.
WAIT I'M NOT THROUGH PLAYING. DON'T YOU WANT --
I UNDERSTAND, FRIEND HOLD ON

AW, FORGET IT
JUST AN ACCIDENT. ANYWAY WHAT FUN IS IT TO GET ALL HOT AND BOTHERED OVER AN ACCIDENT?
GO HOME, SUPERSTUD. GOD KNOWS SOMEONE SHOULD.
CHOOM
HIT HER FAST AND HARD, JONN! THESE ICE SHIELDS ARE ONLY MEANT TO GIVE YOU A MOMENT --
THE MOMENT, I THINK, IS PASSED.
GONE?
DO YOU FEEL AS STUPID AS I DO RIGHT NOW?
INDEED.

SO.. AS I WAS SAYIN' THAT CLARK MIGHT LEARN A THING OR TWO FROM A REAL AMERICAN HERO LIKE SUPERMAN...
AND I'M SURE HE APPRECIATED IT.
I'LL BE RIGHT BACK, JIMMY MANJULA, DON'T LET HIM SCARE YOU. HE'S REALLY A BIG PUSSYCAT...
AN OPINIONATED BELLIGERENT FRUSTRATING PUSSYCAT
SO MANJULA... YOU'RE A LOT BETTER KEPT THAN THE LADIES OLSEN USUALLY TROTS OUT
HE PROMISING YOU CITIZENSHIP, OR DID THAT "PHOTOJOURNALIST" RAP ACTUALLY WORK FOR A CHANGE?
OH GOD
PLEASE GET BACK HERE SOON, CLARK. SO HE HAS A SAFE TARGET TO ABUSE --
UH HI. HEH.
FUNNY HOW HARD IT IS TO USE SUPER-HEARING WHEN YOUR FATHER'S TALKING... HEH
DIGEST VERSION. WASHINGTON D.C. MANHUNTER. FIRE BAD. NEED NEW CLOTHES.
THIS IS CATASTROPHICALLY UPSETTING. ISN'T IT?
MR. LANE, I DON'T THINK.
"MISTER ACTION!" THAT'S WHAT HIS CONQUESTS IN THE SECRETARIAL POOL CALL HIM, RIGHT JIM?
IF YOU MEAN "CATASTROPHIC" AS IN NOAH'S FLOOD OR SHERMAN'S MARCH, NO --
-- THIS IS WORSE.
THEN I'LL BE HOME LATER. SORRY.
SAM LANE, YOU APOLOGIZE TO THAT GIRL THIS INSTANT!
WHAT? I'M JUST JOKIN'. RIGHT?

SOMEWHERE COLD.
TEMPERATURE SUSTAINED AT 106 DEGREES.. NOMINAL RADIATION READINGS FROM AMBIENT POWER SOURCE WE'RE READY TO MAKE HISTORY...
MUST YOU SING?
I'M SORRY THE HOLIDAYS. THEY STAY WITH ME FOR WEEKS.
WHAT IS THE PRESSURE OF THE INCUBATION CHAMBER -- IN PLANETARY UNITS, IF YOU PLEASE?
DRE DEL DREIDEL DREIDEL I MADE IT OUT OF CLAY... AND WHEN IT'S DRY AND READY --
FWOSSSSH
UM FIFTEEN POINT SEVEN TIMES EO-STAT. HEAVY PLANET
INDEED.. ONLY KRYPTON WAS FIFTEEN POINT SEVEN NINE TIMES THE DENSITY OF EARTH.
OH
POINT SEVEN NINE
OF COURSE.. SO MANY FIGURES -- HONEST MISTAKE POINT SEVEN NINE ADJUSTING
HONEST MISTAKE
AAIIEEEEEE
ONE THAT WOULD RENDER THIS HIGHLY CONTROLLED EXPERIMENT IMPOTENT, YES?
PLEASE HAVE THE GENERAL SEND ME ANOTHER NOBEL-WINNING SCIENTIST
ONE NOT SO NERVOUS, PLEASE
AND WHEN IT'S DRY AND READY, WITH DREIDEL I WILL PLAY.


THE UNITED PRESS CLUB, WASHINGTON D.C.
I DON'T UNDERSTAND. SHE APPEARS OUT OF NOWHERE. DISAPPEARS JUST AS QUICKLY
YOU'RE SURE SCORCH IS GONE?
A TRUE CREATURE OF FLAME, HER MIND IS A BEACON OF CHAOS WERE SHE STILL IN THE AREA, I WOULD BE DRAWN TO HER, AS I WAS BEFORE.
THE FLAME IS OUT. ONLY THE MYSTERY REMAINS A MYSTERY YOU SEEM TO BE HOLDING THE CLUES TO
I KNOW I KNOW I'M SORRY IT'S COMPLICATED. I MET SCORCH SOMEWHERE PAINFUL.
SOMEWHERE THAT DOESN'T EXIST
A LITTLE SOMEWHERE CALLED EMPEROR JOKER!
I CAN'T GO INTO IT YET BUT I PROMISE I'LL EXPLAIN IT WHEN I SORT IT OUT MYSELF.
IF SHE'S GONE, AT LEAST THAT GIVES ME SOME TIME...
WHAT?
I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A "TWIST AND LICK" MAN MYSELF
I'M AN "INHALER." ESPECIALLY WHEN IT'S FOR REASONS OF THERAPY.
FIRE. IS MORE THAN A PHYSICAL WEAKNESS FOR ME KAL-EL THE FLICKERING DANCE OF IT THE PRIMAL POWER. DISRUPTS LOGIC. TURNS MY MIND INTO HELLNOISE --
SOMETHING IN THIS PRECIOUS LITTLE STARCH BOMB ERASES ALL THAT
FEEL BETTER?
INFINITELY. PRAISE MAL'E'KAK.

SO? HOME, MR. KENT? NEW YEAR'S EVE SNUGGLED WITH THE WIFE?
I WISH. IN-LAWS ARE PUTTING THE BLOCK ON US. BIG TIME. PLUS, I DON'T KNOW...
I HAVE THE FEELING THAT THERE'S SOMETHING FOR ME TO DO HERE, STILL.
CLARK, SHE'S GONE, I PROMISE. I WOULDN'T BE SO CAVALIER ABOUT YOUR EVENING IF SHE WERE STILL AROUND --
I KNOW I KNOW
THE CHAIR IS AN HEIRLOOM. OVER ONE HUNDRED YEARS OLD. IT'S BEEN BEHIND THE DESK IN THE OVAL OFFICE SINCE --
YES, YES, POMP AND CIRCUMSTANCE AND MINIWAX. FANTASTIC --
BUT MY SAX-PLAYING PREDECESSOR HAD A PENCHANT FOR NOSHING PORK RINDS IN IT
THE CUSHION IS RUINED. BURN IT.
I STILL HAVE SOME THINGS TO DO HERE. LOIS WILL UNDERSTAND
WHAT'S THE BIG DEAL ABOUT NEW YEAR'S ANYWAY?
BIG DEAL RIGHT.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT SCORCH, EITHER. I'LL GET HER SOON AS I CHECK ON --
HOME.

I'LL CHECK ON LUTHOR?
WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
YOU TOOK A DETOUR. DON'T WORRY, WE WON'T STAY LONG.
DIRECT MIND TO MIND INTERFACE IS ABOUT ONE THOUSAND TIMES FASTER THAN "REAL TIME."
OUR BODIES ARE STILL IN THE CLUB, APPROXIMATELY A SIXTH OF A SECOND AFTER I PULLED YOU IN.
PULLED ME IN WHERE?
MY MIND MANSION.
IT'S A NEURO-KINETIC TECHNIQUE WHEREIN THE ADEPT CREATES A MENTAL HOME FOR THEIR MEMORIES, FEELINGS, AND EMOTIONS, ALLOWING FOR EASIER ACCESS.
IN MY CASE, IT'S ALSO A CONVENIENT WAY TO MANAGE IDENTITIES.
FOR EXAMPLE -- I CAN STEP INTO THE JOHN JONES ROOM WHENEVER I LIKE, AND ASSIMILATE HIS PERSONALITY TRAITS IN AN INSTANT.
SAME WITH THE BETTY NEHRING SKIN, WHO JUST DEVOURED THREE PLATES OF CHOCOS WITH YOU AT THE PRESS CLUB.
J'ONN, I -- I APPRECIATE YOUR SHOWING ME THIS. EVEN IF IT DOES FEEL A LITTLE LIKE A MENTAL SHANGHAI --
SO PLEASE DON'T THINK I'M BEING RUDE BY ASKING WHY YOU'RE DOING THIS.
BECAUSE YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT THE BIG DEAL IS ABOUT NEW YEAR'S EVE.

"THIS IS ***TER'YA MAO.*** THE ***CIRCUMVOLUTION.***

"THE ***END*** OF ONE PLANETARY CYCLE AND THE ***BEGINNING*** OF ANOTHER. IT WAS THE MOST ***SACRED*** AND ***BELOVED*** HOLIDAY AMONG THE ***MALECA'ANDRIANS...***

"UNTIL THEY ALL ***DIED.***

"AS YOU KNOW, MY PEOPLE SHARED A ***COMMON MIND,*** A COLLECTIVE ***CONSCIOUSNESS...***

"BUT PARTICIPATION IN THE ***MIND-WELL*** WAS NOT ***ASSUMED.*** CONJOINING WAS A ***CONSCIOUS*** CHOICE, AND CAME WITH A ***RESPONSIBILITY...***

"ONE HAD TO ***PARTICIPATE*** ACTIVELY, SO THAT THE ***"WELL"*** MIGHT REMAIN ***LUSH*** AND ***VITAL.*** TER'YA MAO IS THE TIME THIS COMPACT IS ***FULFILLED.***

"EACH AND EVERY MALECA'ANDRIAN IN TURN ***OPENS*** THEIR MINDS, AS I HAVE DONE TO ***YOU*** --

"-- AND THEY ***SHARE*** THEIR EXPERIENCES OF THE PAST CYCLE WITH THE ***CLAN. ALL*** OF THEM, IN THE SPAN OF A ***STARBLINK.***

"THEIR ***GLORIES.*** THEIR ***UGLINESS.*** THEIR SHATTERED ***DREAMS.*** FRAGILE HOPES. TENDER PRIVACIES. ***LOVES.*** FRUSTRATIONS. DESIRES. ***HOPE."***

JOY. MOST ***ALWAYS JOY.***

EACH ***LIGHT*** A STORY. EACH ONE UNIQUE IN COLOR AND SHAPE FROM ITS ***BILLIONS*** OF BROTHERS AND SISTERS.

YOU HAVE ***NEVER*** SEEN SUCH COLORS IN THIS GALAXY, MY FRIEND... YOU ***NEVER WILL.***

IT'S ***BEAUTIFUL,*** J'ONN... IT TRULY IS. I -- I DON'T THINK THEY ***MAKE*** WORDS ON EARTH THAT COULD DO IT ***JUSTICE.***

BUT WHY --?

... BECAUSE LOIS ***WILL*** UNDERSTAND IF YOU DO NOT RETURN HOME FOR ***CYCLE'S END,*** KAL-EL. SHE ***WILL...***

BUT SOME DAY, WHEN SHE'S ***GONE,*** THERE WILL BE A SMALL ROOM IN THE MANSION OF ***YOUR*** MIND... WHICH LIES ***UNFURNISHED. EMPTY.***

A ROOM THAT COULD BE ADORNED WITH THE ***TOUCH*** OF YOUR BELOVED'S LIP... THE ***SCENT*** OF HER SKIN... THE WARMTH OF HER ***BODY*** AS YOU SHARED A KISS ON ***NEW YEAR'S EVE.***

EMPTY ROOMS ARE VERY VERY COLD.

?
MY TREAT.
GO HOME, KENT. THERE WILL STILL BE BAD GUYS TO FIGHT TOMORROW.
THERE ALWAYS ARE.
WAIT... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TONIGHT?
THE SAME THING I DO EVERY NEW YEAR'S...
...ENJOY MY BEAUTIFUL MANSION.
LET'S TRY THIS AGAIN... WHAT ARE YOU GOING TO DO TONIGHT?

SIGH OKAY... THIS IS GOOD, YES? I KNOW IT'S NOT MUCH, BUT --
YES. IT IS PERFECT.
YOU'RE OKAY WITH THIS? SCORCH IS --
GONE.
LEX IS --
PRESIDENT. FOR NOW.
RIGHT. RIGHT...
OH, MAN -- THIS IS CRAZY. I'M GOING TO SUBJECT YOU TO GENERAL TESTOSTERONE TO MAKE YOU FEEL BETTER?!
IF IT WILL PUT YOU AT EASE, I CAN TELEPATHICALLY MAKE YOUR FATHER-IN-LAW FORGET HOW TO SPEAK FOR THE NEXT FEW HOURS.
NOT UNLIKE A MINOR STROKE, ONLY WITH NO PAIN.
OH. YOU WERE KIDDING...
THAT'S NOT RIGHT, J'ONN...
WHEN NOT BUSY SAVING MARRIAGES, I HAVE BEEN KNOWN TO MAKE A FUNNY FROM TIME TO TIME.
HEY EVERYONE, SORRY I'M LATE -- BUT YOU WON'T GUESS WHO I BUMPED INTO!
JOHN JOHNSTONE! HE USED TO WORK ON MY FATHER'S FARM, AND HE WAS IN TOWN --
OH BOY.

SHUT YOUR PIE HOLES! CAN'T YOU SEE I'M ON A PHONE CALL?!
YOU SAID I WAS THE ONLY WOMAN TO MODEL YOUR TURTLE BOY COSTUME.
DID I? OH, I MEANT... UH... YOU FILLED OUT THE SHELL THE BEST.
HERE ARE THE CHOCOS. YOU'RE GONNA NEED THESE.
I'LL SAVE YOU A SLEEVE.
DIE, PIG.
D'OH.
YES SIR, I'LL SAY! YOU MADE THIS A NEW YEAR'S TO REMEMBER! THANK YOU!
PRESIDENT-ELECT LUTHOR WANTS TO APPOINT ME SECRETARY OF DEFENSE!
DOESN'T GET MUCH WORSE THAN THIS... DOES IT, SMALLVILLE?
NO... NO, I DON'T IMAGINE IT DOES...
WHAT ARE YOU TWO IDIOTS LAUGHING ABOUT? DIDN'T YOU HEAR WHAT I SAID?
I'M SURE THEY'RE VERY HAPPY FOR YOU, DEAR --
WHAT'S SO @$#%- FUNNY?!
HAH
HEH... THIS IS ALL GONNA HURT TOMORROW, ISN'T IT?
BIG TIME. AREN'T YOU GLAD YOU MADE IT HOME FOR CRUMMY NEW YEAR'S?
WOULDN'T HAVE MISSED IT FOR THE WORLD.
THE END